

Remarks Prepared for Richard E. Greene
Regional Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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My long held belief is that state and local governments, business and industry, along with community and environmental organizations, should be responsible for charting the course in the field of environmental protection. I cannot think of any place where this is more true than in Texas. Under the leadership of Chairman Houston, the state has over 3,000 employees in over 16 locations, working “on-the-front lines” in community after community to protect the environment and public health. At EPA, we have about 900 employees located in Dallas and throughout the five state region.

I believe the role of the federal government is to assist state and local officials to achieve their goals in protecting public health and the environment. . . not the other way around. Many believe that the federal government is too big and too invasive. My job is to ensure, at the regional level, that EPA is working to help you find ways to accomplish our common environmental goals, and I am committed to that effort. I am pleased to report that when I arrived at EPA just two months ago, I discovered an organization of employees dedicated to achieving our common goal of protecting public health and the environment. It is a great experience and I am proud to be part of this important effort.

At EPA, our goal is clear and simple; to make America’s air cleaner, its water purer, and its land better protected. I am pleased to report that Texas has continued to demonstrate its leadership in helping us achieve our national goals. Today, I’d like to share with you some of our accomplishments, and some of the work we still need to do.

Before I talk about our common goal of cleaner air, I would like to touch briefly on two other important goals, and the President’s efforts to achieve them. First of all, water is an area of major concern for us. In fact, water quality and quantity issues will likely pose the greatest environmental challenge of the 21st century. There are no communities more knowledgeable of this challenge than those here in Texas.

Since passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972, we have solved many of the problems resulting from the direct discharge of pollutants into America’s waterways through improved sewage treatment and industrial wastewater management. As a result, many of America’s waters are once again safe for drinking, swimming, and fishing. However, the challenges we face in 2003 are not as clearly defined as those we faced 30 years ago. It was pretty obvious back then that the direct dumping of waste into our rivers had to stop, but today the major contributor to water pollution nationwide is much more difficult to address – nonpoint source pollution. The runoff from city streets and rural farms, from parking lots and suburban lawns, are all nonpoint sources of water pollution. Countless small acts, such as changing your oil in your driveway without proper disposal of the used oil, or over-fertilizing your yards can add up to big problems. Nonpoint source pollution is a serious problem, and EPA can’t solve the problem alone. As people

learn more about the ways, even small ways, that individual actions can add up to big environmental consequences, they will become active partners in our effort to leave America's waters cleaner for generations to come.

We are recognizing the value of implementing watershed protection approaches, and are using this tool as an organizing framework for their protection and restoration activities. The President's budget included, for the second year in a row, funding for a watershed initiative that builds partnerships for cleaner water. It helps us craft solutions for each watershed based on its unique needs and challenges.

Many creative and innovative methods for dealing with our water quality issues are also being put into action at the local level. That is why EPA created the Clean Water Partners program to recognize the remarkable work that is being done to enhance the health of our nation's waters. We received nearly 200 applications from around the country for our Clean Water Partners program. Three Texas-based projects earned the designation. The City of Austin's, Water and Wastewater Department, the Lower Colorado River Authority, and the Upper Trinity Regional Water District have all developed detailed plans focused on protecting their local watersheds. Our future successes in providing purer water is in focusing on the importance of watershed-based planning and working in partnership with communities and local governments.

Let me touch on how we are working to better protect the land. The most significant accomplishment in this area is the passage of historic brownfields legislation. As many of you know, a brownfield is a parcel of land that is polluted and unused, a blight on the landscape and a drain on the vitality of the community in which it is located. Last year, we saw the results of nearly a decade worth of effort when President Bush signed into law brownfields legislation that will help communities all across America transform neighborhood eyesores into community assets.

Restoring a brownfield brings enormous benefits to a local community. Experience has shown that every dollar of federal money spent on a brownfield leverages about two-and-a-half dollars in private investment. In addition, restoring a brownfield helps preserve open space. Every acre of brownfields that is restored saves more than 4.5 acres of greenspace. Brownfields restoration is a win-win for everyone - from the children who have new places to play when a brownfield is turned into a ballfield, to the parents who have new jobs when a brownfield becomes the site of an economic development success story.

Since 1996, EPA has recognized participants in Texas' Voluntary Cleanup Program, one of only 19 state programs nationwide, under our federal Brownfields program. This allows local developers to work directly with the state agency to clean up and restore abandoned properties. Today, Texas' program is top in the nation with about 850 active sites, and over 580 cleanup certificates issued. To date, the Texas program has received over \$3 million from EPA.

The new Brownfields law will provide an additional \$50 million to the states, with over \$1 million going to Texas. The City of Houston was awarded one of the first Brownfield assessment grants in the country. Also, Houston was selected as a Brownfields Showcase Community, recognizing their efforts to leverage over \$520 million of private investment and nearly \$15 million in public financing, creating more than 2,700 jobs and restoring 557 acres of land. Today, their progress is paying off. Important redevelopment projects like, the Astros Field, 5 Houston Center in downtown, the Washington Courtyards, and the Houston Aquarium, demonstrate the on-going success of this program. This year, the President's new brownfields law will make available over \$100 million for specific brownfield assessments and cleanup. The first of these grants will be announced later this month.

We are also working to protect the land through continued support of Superfund clean up efforts around the country. The Bush Administration fully embraces the principle that the polluter pays, especially when it comes to cleaning up Superfund sites. The Superfund law puts the burden of paying for the cleanup of polluted sites where it belongs, on those responsible for creating the mess. Through aggressive action by the EPA, more than 70 percent of all Superfund cleanups have been paid by the responsible parties.

Finally, let me talk about our goal of cleaner air, the topic you all have been very focused on in Houston, along with a lot of other areas in the State of Texas, including where my family and I live in Dallas/Ft. Worth. On the national front, we are looking to new ways to provide for clean air. Since the creation of the EPA more than thirty years ago, our air has become significantly cleaner. Legislation, such as the Clean Air Act, has gone a long way in reversing the environmental damage decades of unchecked pollution had inflicted on our environment. Despite this progress, there is still more that needs to be done. Children suffer from asthma at alarmingly high rates, other health problems persist, many of our national parks, like Big Bend and the Grand Canyon, are shrouded in a murky haze, and our environment continues to suffer from poor air quality.

However, as we work to address this situation, more often than not, we are finding that the tools which served us well in the past don't always work, and are attracting a great amount of litigation, making them inefficient. While the Clean Air Act has made a difference, it's important to note that one of the most successful programs in over a decade to address air quality has been the Acid Rain program. The Acid Rain program has achieved nearly universal compliance, has cost far less to implement than traditional regulatory approaches, and has already reduced emissions to levels even lower than the government established. That is why President Bush has introduced the landmark Clear Skies Act of 2003. This legislation will achieve mandatory reductions of 70 percent of three of the most dangerous pollutants emitted by power plants; nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and mercury. Clear Skies will set a clear, objective standard for mandatory reductions, and, although it sets the goal, Clear Skies does not regulate the path to meeting that goal. This flexibility enables us to pursue the most cost effective approach to cleaner air. By using this market-based approach, we will remove 35 million

more tons of NO_x, SO₂, and mercury from the air over the first ten years of the Clear Skies Act than the current Clean Air Act would achieve in that same time frame.

In Texas, Clear Skies will also provide dramatic health benefits to Texans every year, preventing 300 premature deaths and reducing by 76,000 fewer the days when sufferers are unable to work because of bad air quality. We estimate approximately \$3 billion in annual benefits to Texas as a result of Clear Skies. Clear Skies legislation has also been introduced in Congress, and the debate is on-going. So... stay tuned.

Now, let us turn our attention home, to local efforts. The State of Texas, through TCEQ, under the leadership of Chairman Houston, has continued influencing the national policy adopted by EPA. Recently, the state adopted an innovative, flexible approach to clean air, which I am pleased to report, EPA “borrowed” and adopted for the entire country. This program allows for early planning by areas to voluntarily implement clean air plans for the eight-hour ozone standard, and allows them to receive a deferred designation status from EPA. In Texas, Austin, San Antonio, Tyler/Longview and Corpus Christi are participating in the program. Today, we have eight areas in Region Six that have signed clean air early action compacts. Nationwide, Early Action Compacts have attracted much attention, with 35 other areas signing on. Congratulations TCEQ for leading the way.

Other voluntary and proactive efforts by Texas for clean air include the following:

Our Adopt-A-School Bus program. Just last week, I joined EPA Administrator Christie Whitman to launch Houston’s program as part of our Clean School Bus USA initiative. Our goal is ensure, by the year 2010, that every public school bus on the road is a clean school bus. Every day, 24 million children travel safely to and from school on nearly a half million school buses. Those buses travel more than 4 billion miles each year. I have seen one estimate that suggests that one school bus here in Texas emits as much soot in one year as 114 cars.

Our efforts working with the Texas Council on Environmental Technology to expedite introduction of new technologies into the marketplace.

Our voluntary plane, train, and tugboat emission reductions agreements to bring clean air equipment to Houston.

Our energy initiatives with the Department of Energy to reduce air pollution and save energy.

Earlier this year, the EPA and the Greater Houston Partnership hosted a national forum to share our innovative ideas from the Houston experience with other cities from across the country. For many years, we have all been working together to bring cleaner air to Houston, as well as other cities across Texas. You have lead the way in developing creative, innovative solutions, and we thank you. I cannot think of any place in Texas where Clean Air is more of a priority than here in Houston.

A few weeks ago, I met with Governor Perry, and he shared with me his support for the Texas Emission Reduction Program, an essential component of our clean air strategy. This past weekend, the 78th Texas Legislature demonstrated their commitment to clean air by restoring full funding to the Texas Emission Reduction Program. This vital legislation establishes a variety of innovative programs which are critical elements in our strategy to control ozone in Texas. The Greater Houston Partnership demonstrated unprecedented leadership and tenacity to organize a broad coalition for clean air, including many other urban chambers of commerce across the state. We all benefitted from your efforts. Thank you. "I believe with the passage of TERP funding, the conditions outlined last summer by EPA of the potential consequences of an unfunded TERP program appear to no longer be needed." So I congratulate you once again on a job very well done.

I wish our job was complete, and that we could spend more time celebrating the passage of TERP funding. But time is not on our side. Now we must focus on implementing the clean air plan, and preparing for any changes to the plan during mid-course review next year. Your creative, innovative solutions have worked thus far, and I believe the continued joint efforts by all stakeholders will put Houston in the forefront of innovations and planning for the future. Your clean air plan serves as a roadmap for what needs to be done to meet the new eight-hour ozone standard.

As many of you know, this July each Governor will submit designations to the EPA under the new standard. Next April, EPA will finalize designations for areas across the country. The mid-course review, an obligation under your current one hour clean air plan, places the Houston area in a strategic position to address the new eight-hour ozone standard. The efforts for the mid-course review can only help the progress toward planning for the eight-hour ozone standard. Finally, this Thursday the 5th Circuit Court is hearing the defense of our approval of your clean air plan last October. Clearly, the passage of legislation to fully fund TERP strengthens our defense. Success in the 5th Circuit Court will clear the way for implementation of your roadmap for clean air.

In closing, I would like to mention an exciting program, Performance Track. The program allows us to recognize and endorse the efforts of local government, business and industry who set goals beyond federally mandated environmental laws. In Region 6, we have 38 PTRACK partners, 21 of which are from Texas. Some of our most recent additions include nine companies from Texas: the Port of Houston Authority, Motorola, Louisiana Pacific, Inspectorate America, International Paper, MD Anderson, International Paper, Ryder Integrated Logistics, and Rockwell Collins. Each of these Texas-based members have joined our elite group of partners, and have demonstrated their commitment to bring about environmental improvements to their communities.

From Clear Skies to watersheds to brownfields, the environmental policies we are pursuing reflect a deep understanding that our environmental quality is closely linked to our quality of life. The 21st century holds an environmental landscape that has changed dramatically since the EPA was established. Meeting the new challenges that the future holds will not only take commitment to building partnerships, but also the motivation to

try new ideas. As leaders, we know first hand that it can be difficult to bring about even beneficial change. Through the years we have done so successfully, and in the area of environmental policy it's absolutely necessary that we do the same thing. Our environment isn't static, and our policy should not be either.

As we think about the future of environmental protection, whether it's reducing harmful air emissions, cleaning up Superfund sites, or addressing global climate change, we need to seek out the big ideas, ideas that challenge conventional wisdom, inspire our imaginations, and leave a lasting mark of improvement on our environment and our quality of life. By working together, pursuing new ideas, and not getting trapped in the status quo, we can work to ensure a future of environmental health; a future of cleaner air, purer water, and better protected land, for this and many generations to come.

Thank you.